Letter to the RANK and FILE

At the last general membership meeting of IBT Local 249, a few individuals spoke out to criticize the presence of the rank and file paper called "From the Horse's Mouth." Supposedly, these individuals were disturbed that there was an independent voice that dared to criticize some of the union leadership, locally and nationally.

At the Stewards' meeting on Dec. 1, this criticism revealed its true purpose. Part of this meeting was devoted to an attack on the paper and one of its founders, Mel Packer. Further, there was a serious attempt made to begin discrediting Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC), which is a national rank and file organization that has presently involved Teamsters from over 100 cities. The purpose of TDC is to force the International to negotiate a decent national freight contract in place of the disaster that we have been working under for the last three years.

The Union's proposals for the new contract were presented by Fitzsimmons to a meeting of 300 locals in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 25, 1975. As TDC had predicted, the proposals are terrible and do not even begin to speak to our real concerns.

Clearly, in order for Fitzsimmons to ram this contract through, he must remove his opposition. And that means that the International has every intention of trying to destroy TDC and will attempt to use local officials to do their dirty work. Here in Local 249 and J.C. 40, we are witnessing the start of that effort.

Under the cover of pretending to be disturbed about the presence of some Teamsters who adhere to a socialist political philosophy, some of the local officers and their hacks are attacking TDC as a "Communist organization."

THIS IS AN OUT AND OUT LIE!

TDC is a rank and file organization that is open to ANY Teamster who is willing to support the TDC contract demands and the petition campaign carrying these demands.

ANY IBT'er who is concerned about the contract and wants to fight the companies for better conditions is welcome to join TDC. ALL TDC members have the right to democratic participation in TDC meetings.

We do not ask each new TDC supporter what their political affiliations are because it is not a matter of concern to us. What concerns us is whether or not that person is willing to help build TDC. There are probably many supporters of TDC with whom we have tremendous political differences; but that won't stop us from working with them in the fight for a decent contract.

Because we are believers in democracy and the right of free political association, and because we do not believe in discriminating against anyone because of their individual political philosophies, we will continue to work with the present members of TDC. This includes those members who have informed us that they are socialists or members of a socialist organization.

The fact that one of the founding members of TDC, Mel Packer, has informed us of his socialist beliefs does not in any way lessen our support of TDC. Nor does it reduce our determination to build a rank and file Teamster movement that has the strength to reject a bad contract and force negotiation of a good one in 1976.

It is clear to us that those individuals and officers who are attempting to discredit TDC by singling out a few individuals and screaming "Communist" are working for the International and Fitzsimmons. They are trying to destroy TDC and some of its hardest working members because they are opposed to the organization of the rank and file. They are opposed to our organization because they know that they will not be able to control us or our movement.And anything they cannot control, they fear.

We have endorsed this statement to the rank and file because we want you to become involved in TDC and to reject the McCarthy-type witch-hunt hysteria that some people are trying to create.

We must no longer allow ourselves to be divided as these people are trying to do through use of red-baiting tactics. Division can only lead to defeat and another three years of living under a lousy contract rammed down our throats by officials who don't give a damn about any of us.

Some of us who have signed this letter were at the founding conference of TDC last August 16. We have been actively involved in its organization and building ever since. We believe in its potential and its goals. We encourage you to do the same.

Come to the TDC meeting on Saturday, Dec. 13th, Brashear Center, 20th and Sarah in South Side, and find out for yourself what TDC is all about. It's your contract.

SIGNED BY:

LEO BOEHM, UNITED PARCEL SERVICE*, LOCAL 249
"FRENCHY" CAIN, ALLING & CORY*, LOCAL 249
BILL CHERILLA, TRANS-AMERICAN*, LOCAL 249
REGE CONROY, McLEANS*, LOCAL 249
CHUCK DAVEY, WERNER CONTINENTAL*, LOCAL 249
BOB FALGIONE, UNITED PARCEL SERVICE*, LOCAL 249
DAVE GAIBIS, WERNER CONTINENTAL*, LOCAL 261
BILL LYNCH, RED STAR*, LOCAL 249
BOB MILLER, UNITED PARCEL SERVICE*, LOCAL 249
LOU PAIL, UNITED PARCEL SERVICE*, LOCAL 249

(* company for identification purposes only)

PLEASE SEE OTHER SIDE →